CHAPTER 49

UPLAND BRUSH TYPE

Under many conditions the upland brush type can be managed to benefit wildlife, and is also useful for aesthetic management objectives. This chapter provides revised guidelines for managing upland brush. Foresters likely will have a major role in site selection, and will be directly involved in management.

The following guidelines apply to all DNR lands north of Wisconsin Highway 21, and the county forests following acceptance by county forest committees and amendment of respective ten-year plans.

Upland brush is recognized as an important component of summer deer range (see M. C. 2112). The principle value of brushy openings to all forest wildlife lies in the variety of vegetation they provide, especially in terms of forage value. Fruit production in brushy openings is seven to ten times greater than that under the forest canopy. In addition, more open areas afford many of the same values provided by the grass type (Chapter 48 of this Handbook). These characteristics give brushy openings their special aesthetic appeal -- they provide visual variety, improve sight distance, and create wildlife viewing opportunities for forest visitors.

Where aesthetic considerations are important, use brushy areas to increase sight distance and provide visual diversity. Maintain such areas in heavy timber by preventing timber encroachment. Favor areas with low-growing shrubs and few trees; flowering shrubs are particularly eye-pleasing and add a special aesthetic flavor when present. Sumac openings are of special color appeal in early fall. Where large areas of upland brush exist and are not aesthetically appealing, re-stocking can be considered if there are no conflicts with wildlife objectives. Wildlife objectives are very often satisfied with slight adjustments in re-stocking plans. Brushy areas can be used to create vistas and increase sight distance when the grass type is lacking for this purpose.

Although upland brush often occurs in situations where succession patterns make them difficult to manage and maintain, some stands are relatively secure. It is important that these be set aside and protected as permanent wildlife habitat. No acreage goal for this type has been set, other than that implied in M. C. 2112 in which guidelines are given for grass and upland brush in combination. Experience indicates that when the grass type is not present, upland brush becomes more important. It is in these situations that we most need to look for opportunities to manage upland brush -- especially those brushy openings that are quite stable and contain vegetation providing high-quality wildlife habitat. Management recommendations are provided below.

TYPE DESCRIPTION

Pre-existing brushy openings containing more than ten percent stocking of trees and more than 30 percent stocking of low-growing shrubs and trees; usually with marginally sufficient or insufficient stocking of commercially desirable trees. Often results from succession following historical disturbances; sites may include old camps, homesteads, log landings, frost pockets, etc. Management potential depends upon the direction of natural succession and the rate at which it is occurring. Brushy areas with less invasion by large tree species will be more permanent. Management opportunity is likely greatest in those forest types containing the fewest pioneer species.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

Seek to maintain brushy openings as permanent habitat in those one-quarter township-sized habitat inventory units (HIU) where grassy openings are deficient.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

If forest reconnaissance maps do not identify small areas of upland brush, they should be recorded on the maps when encountered. DNR Technical Bulletin No. 44, Appendix E, p. 93-98, recommends procedures that can be used to map brushy openings. Those brushy openings identified and designated as "critical" by wildlife management, and mapped as provided in M. C. 2112, are to be set aside as permanent brushland habitat areas and are not to be diminished by any project activity.

This cover type is less permanent than the grass type, and does not provide the same level of quality for wildlife habitat. Hence the upland brush type is not intended to be an in-kind substitute for well-sodded grassy openings. Rather, it might be useful for wildlife management objectives when the grass type is deficient and it is important to maintain habitat diversity.